

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 NEA-11 ISO-00 ACDA-12 AGRE-00

AID-05 CEA-01 CEQ-01 CG-00 CIAE-00 COME-00

DLOS-09 DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-08 EPA-01 SOE-02

DOE-15 FMC-01 TRSE-00 H-01 INR-10 INT-05 IO-13

JUSE-00 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 NSF-01 OES-07 OMB-01

PA-01 PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /179 W

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FM AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5558

INFO AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L CASABLANCA 0908

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EFIS, MARR, MASS, PARM, PBOR, PLOS, XY

SUBJ: ABILITY OF MOROCCO TO PATROL OFFSHORE FISHERIES

REF: STATE 90967

1. OFFSHORE (PRESUMABLY BEYOND 25 NAUTICAL MILES) DOES NOT PRESENTLY CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO EITHER MOROCCO'S TOTAL FISHERIES CATCH OR TO ITS ECONOMY ALTHOUGH THE GOM HAS HIGH HOPES THAT ITS RICH WATERS SOMEDAY WILL FEATURE IMPORTANTLY IN THE NATION'S ECONOMY. OFFSHORE FISHING IS UNDERTAKEN BY BOTH MOROCCAN-OWNED AND BY FOREIGN-OWNED, JOINT-VENTURE VESSELS LICENSED TO OPERATE OUT OF MOROCCO PORTS. JAPANESE AND SOUTH KOREAN (ROK) FISHING VESSELS CATCH LION'S SHARE OF FISH UNDER
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JOINT VENTURE ARRANGEMENTS, MOST OF WHICH EXPORTED VIA LAS PALMAS. IN 1975 THESE EXPORTS (MAINLY SQUID, CUTTLE FISH AND OCTOPUS) AMOUNTED TO ONLY 4,077T. IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS A NEW TWIST HAS BEEN ADDED WITH THE ARRIVAL OF TWO SOVIET STERN TRAWLERS CONTRACTED TO DELIVER 800 T OF FORZEN SARDINES PER MONTH, CAUGHT IN THE LOCAL WATERS, TO LOCAL CANNERY: EXCESS FISH, IF ANY, CAN BE KEPT BY THE VESSEL. FOREIGN FISHING INSIDE OF

MOROCCO'S WATERS IS ENCOURAGED BY THE GOM, PROVIDED IT IS DONE SO AS A LEGITIMATE JOINT VENTURE AND PROVIDED IT DOES NOT COMPETE DIRECTLY WITH EXISTING, ARTISANAL FISHERIES. UNLICENSED FISHING IS NOT LOOKED ON WITH FAVOR, BUT IS TOLERATED AS LONG AS IT SERVES A POLITICAL PURPOSE. MOROCCO, FOR EXAMPLE, REPORTEDLY HAS PERMITTED USSR VESSELS TO FISH WITHOUT PERMISSION IN LOCAL WATERS OFF SAHARA--PRESUMABLY SINCE THIS MIGHT IN SOME FASHION SUPPORT GOM CLAIMS TO TERRITORY. OF LATE, TALKS WITH TWO COUNTRIES--SPAIN AND THE USSR--HAVE TAKEN ON POLITICAL OVERTONES. THE RECENTLY NEGOTIATED ACCORD WITH SPAIN WAS RENEWED BY MANY MOROCCANS AS SPANISH RECOGNITION OF ITS SOVEREIGNTY OVER SAHARA WATERS. ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS HAVE ALSO HAD MUCH POLITICAL MOTIVATION THE MOROCCAN SIDE, FOR SIMILAR REASONS.

HOWEVER, THE ACCORD WITH THE SPANISH, AND DRAFT PROPOSALS WITH THE SOVIETS, BOTH FEATURE AMBITIOUS PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO EXPAND THE MOROCCAN FISHING INDUSTRY.

2. MOROCCO'S POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT OF OFFSHORE FISHING IS EXCELLENT OVER NEXT 20 YEARS. FISHERIES BIOMASS ALONG MOROCCO'S 1,640 MILE COASTLINE (INCLUDING SAHARA) IS THOUGHT TO BE AT LEAST 2.5 MILLION T, AND SOME ESTIMATES PLACE THIS FIGURE AS HIGH AS 6.0 T.

3. OFFSHORE FISHING IS REGULATED THROUGH BILATERAL AGREEMENTS OR BY REQUIRING FOREIGN FISHING FIRMS TO ESTABLISH JOINT VENTURE CONFIDENTIAL

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COMPANIES SUBJECT TO MOROCCAN LAW. IN ONE RARE INSTANCE, GOM GRANTED PERMISSION FOR TWO USSR TRAWLERS, UNDER CONTRACT TO SWEDISH FIRM, TO FISH IN LOCAL WATERS, WITH FISH DELIVERED TO LOCAL CANNERIES. GOM MADE IT CLEAR THAT THIS WAS TEMPORARY MEASURE TO HELP KEEP MOROCCAN SARDINE CANNING INDUSTRY ALIVE AND THAT AGREEMENT COULD BE TERMINATED AT ANY TIME AFTER SIX MONTHS.

4. OFFSHORE POACHING IS THOUGHT BY MANY MOROCCAN SCIENTIFIC, GOVERNMENT, AND INDUSTRY LEADERS TO POSE GRAVE DANGER TO STOCKS OF FISH. ALTHOUGH NO DIRECT OR IMMEDIATE REDUCTION IN CATCHES CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO FOREIGN POACHING, THERE IS CONCERN THAT MASSIVE POACHING IS DISRUPTING TRADITIONAL SARDINE MIGRATION PATTERNS. OTHERS, NOTABLY FISHERY SCIENTISTS, WORRY THAT STOCKS OF CEPHALOPODES OFF SOUTHERN WESTERN SAHARA MAY BE DAMAGED BY CONTINUED FOREIGN FISHING (JAPANESE HAVE COMMENTED THAT STOCKS NOW APPEAR TO BE FULLY EXPLOITED).

5. NATIONS COMMONLY FELT TO BE POACHING IN MOROCCAN WATERS INCLUDE: USSR, ROK, SPAIN, AND POLAND. NATIONS FISHING IN LOCAL WATERS WITH GOM CONSENT INCLUDE: FRANCE, SPAIN, ITALY, JAPAN, ROK AND USSR (TWO VESSELS MENTIONED ABOVE). ONLY FRANCE,

JAPAN, AND ITALY ARE THOUGHT TO BE TRULY OBSERVING MOROCCAN LAW.

6. ON MARCH 2, 1973 GOM EXTENDED TERRITORIAL JURISDICTION FROM 2 TO 12 NAUTICAL MILES AND FISHERIES JURISDICTION FROM 12 TO 70 NAUTICAL MILES. THE GOM IS CONSIDERING EXTENDING ITS ECONOMIC ZONE TO 200 MILES.

7. IN MOST INSTANCES GOM SEIZURES OF FOREIGN VESSELS HAS LED TO FINES BEING LEVIED AND PAID AND VESSELS RELEASED WITH VARYING DEGREES OF POLITICAL STRAIN BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES INVOLVED. 1975176 SEIZURE OF SPANISH FISHING VESSELS LED TO EXCHANGE OF GUNFIRE BY SPANISH AND MOROCCAN NAVAL VESSELS AND STRAINED RELATIONS. RECENT SIGNATURE OF FISHING ACCORD BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES SHOULD, WHEN PLACED IN FORCE, AMELIORATE PROBLEM. CONFIDENTIAL

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IN EARLY 1976, A SOVIET REFRIGERATOR SHIP WAS SEIZED OSTENSIBLY FOR VIOLATION OF WATERS BUT IN FACT BECAUSE GOM AUTHORITIES SUSPECTED IT WAS SMUGGLING ARMS TO POLISARIO GUERRILLAS. IN FACT, GOM EFFORTS TO PATROL WATERS WITH ALREADY LIMITED RESOURCES ARE HAMPERED BY SECURITY REQUIREMENTS IN THE SAHARA REGION.

8. GOM MIGHT BE WILLING TO WORK WITH MAURITANIA IN JOINT POLICING OFF WESTERN SAHARA TO ENFORCE COMPLIANCE IN OFFSHORE FISHERIES BUT SUCH COOPERATION WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO TAKE ON MILITARY OVERTONES IN VIEW OF THE ONGOING INSURGENCY IN SAHARAN WATERS. RFA DOUBTS THAT GOM WOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER WORKING WITH ANY OTHER NATIONS AT THIS POINT.

9. EMBASSY CONCURS. KUNIHOLM

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NNN

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